



CHARGING FOR NON-RESIDENTIAL SOCIAL CARE TASK AND FINISH GROUP

**MINUTES OF THE DIGITAL MEETING HELD VIA MICROSOFT TEAMS ON MONDAY
15TH FEBRUARY 2021 AT 5.00 P.M.**

PRESENT:

Councillor V. James - Chair

Councillors:

L. Binding and Ms A. Gair

Also Present:

Co-opted Members: Mr C. Luke (Caerphilly People First)

Together with:

T. Husein (Head of Contract Services – Age Cymru Gwent), M. Jacques (Scrutiny Officer), M. Jones (Financial Services Manager), O. Jones (Course Director of the Health & Social Care Management degree programme, University of South Wales), R. Morris (Principal Income and Assessment Officer) and J. Williams (Assistant Director – Adult Services).

1. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were received from Councillor L. Jeremiah and Mrs M. Jones (Parent Network).

2. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

The Chair advised Members that he was employed as a Social Work Manager for another Authority and Cllr L. Binding reminded Members that he was Chair of the Social Services Scrutiny Committee which would be considering the Group's final report prior to it going to Cabinet. The Scrutiny Officer noted these non-prejudicial declarations.

3. MINUTES – 7TH NOVEMBER 2019

It was moved and seconded that the minutes of the meeting held on the 7th November 2019 be agreed as a correct record (and in noting there were 4 for, 0 against and 0 abstentions) this was unanimously agreed.

RESOLVED that the minutes of the Charging for Non-Residential Social Care Task and Finish Group held on 7th November 2019 be approved as a correct record and signed by the Chair.

4. EVIDENCE GATHERING SESSION

The Chair welcomed Owain Jones, Course Director of the Health & Social Care Management degree programme, University of South Wales and Tony Husein, Head of Contract Services at Age Cymru Gwent to the meeting.

Owain Jones advised Members that he trained and equipped future leaders and managers of health and social care and that his principal concern was the lack of collaborative working in terms of both health and social care provision. Mr Jones expressed the view that providers of these care services tended to work in silos. Mr Jones also advised Members that from his experience few schoolchildren wanted to pursue a career in social care.

One Member expressed the view that in order to have a sustainable social care workforce a realistic charging policy had to be applied to ensure that necessary funding was in place. The Member claimed that historically charging for social care within Caerphilly County Borough had been low and that innovative funding models had to be pursued. The Chair agreed that affordability of service provision was key. Because of the different funding levels across Wales Mr Jones suggested that a future all-Wales model should be considered by the Welsh Government. He told the group that in his opinion there should be a National Insurance around social care in the future. Mr Jones suggested a funding model agreed by all Welsh Local Authorities and a public consultation exercise on charging. Owain Jones agreed that innovative funding models should be pursued.

One Member speculated that day services would look very different in the future following the Covid-19 pandemic. Another Member reminded the group that charging rates within the Caerphilly County Borough were very low when compared with charges made by other Local Authorities. He suggested that services would be unsustainable if this trend was allowed to continue and stressed the importance of concentrating on county-wide rather than national recommendations. The Chair agreed that the issue of affordability at a local level was key moving forward.

The Chair asked for opening remarks from Tony Husein. Mr Husein said that he broadly agreed with what had been said at the meeting. He said that his remarks related to care packages at home. He advised that the need for greater communication and collaborative working amongst healthcare professionals had been raised on a number of occasions during his nursing career. He also advised the group about voluntary sector services that were commissioned by both Local and Health Authorities. He suggested that the voluntary sector should have a more active role in the future when it came to care services. Mr Husein raised the issue of some families finding the range of care services available confusing. The transition from home care to residential care was also a source of confusion for some families according to Mr Husein.

The Assistant Director – Adult Services spoke about how demand for services and provision commissioned might change post-pandemic. It was outlined how charging for day services

was traditionally based on a day or length of attendance the question was posed how do we charge for potential new sessional opportunities in the future? The Assistant Director also advised that there was a high percentage of non-payers in the Caerphilly County Borough. This limited the impact of raising the charges for care. Members heard how the Council received few appeals against charging because of the number of non-payers and maximising benefits in terms of disregards for those paying for care.

The Scrutiny Officer asked Owain Jones and Tony Husein what should be the main considerations for Councils when setting charges for this type of social care. In reply Owain Jones wanted to know why the rates charged by Caerphilly County Borough Council were lower than other Councils. One Member advised that there was always a policy in Caerphilly to charge the least amount possible. It was also pointed out that charges effected only a small number of individuals because in Wales nobody paid more than £100 per week. The Member said that hourly and sessional charges had increased by 10% and 20% year on year for 8 years and Caerphilly still had one of the lowest charges in Wales. It was explained by the Member that this charging policy was reviewed every 4 years. The Member asked to be reminded about the highest and lowest rates in Wales. The Principal Income and Assessment Officer had figures for 2019/20. The highest hourly rate for homecare was £21.05 and the lowest was £10.21, in Caerphilly at that time the charge was £12.69. For day care the highest rate was £64.46 per session, in Caerphilly at that time the charge was £8.06 per session. Owain Jones concluded that the current funding model used by Caerphilly County Borough Council was not sustainable. He said that rates would have to increase by more than the current funding model allowed. One Member said that the current recommendation was an annual increase of 20% for daily rates and that he didn't want Caerphilly to ever be in the top percentile in Wales for charges. Mr Jones suggested conducting a modelling exercise to see how quickly Caerphilly could get to the central area for rates in Wales. Tony Husein advised Members that he didn't want to give an amount in terms of charging but said that a lot of elderly people accepted the need to pay for care after financial assessment had taken place.

The Principal Income and Assessment Officer reminded Members that a couple both having homecare would be individually assessed, there wasn't a joint package of care. One Member highlighted that the cheapest rate he'd found for a cleaner was £12.50 per hour and suggested that this put into perspective the low rates currently charged for social care, which was much more demanding, within the Caerphilly borough. One Member recommended that the group ask officers to provide a funding model giving 50% as a medium of all the charges across Wales. This would then give a target to be reached within a defined period rather than the current position of setting a specific percentage increase for charges year on year. The Member said that he did not want Caerphilly to be at the top or the bottom of rates charged across Wales, but he thought it would be appropriate to be in the middle. The Chair endorsed the recommendation and observed that as Caerphilly increased their charges annually, so did other Councils in Wales and unless the Authority aimed for the Welsh midpoint it would always have cheap rates in comparison with other Local Authorities. He said that the current situation was not sustainable but stressed the importance of ensuring that charges weren't increased to a level which caused residents to reject services because of the cost. The Assistant Director – Adult Services said that a reduction in demand due to the cost of services had not occurred as the Council did not withhold services from people in arrears. The Assistant Director did point out that there were very few people in this category as the Council focussed positively on income and benefit maximisation as part of the assessment process. Members also heard how neighbouring authorities with a similar demographic had higher rates and yet had not noticed a significant drop in demand for their services as a result. The Financial Services Manager highlighted how the financial assessment process had safeguards built into it such as the maximum cap of £100 per week, which helped to ensure that nobody was charged more than they could afford.

One Member said that he knew of only one person who had dropped out of Council-run care services and that this person had then decided to return after 6 months. Owain Jones suggested that a scoping exercise detailing drop-out rates from across Wales would be a useful form of evidence. It was suggested by the Financial Services Manager that this sort of information would not be readily available because of the number of different variables around care provision and take-up.

The Chair concluded that there was consensus that the current system needed to be changed to increase rates for non-residential care. He supported the call for a funding model to be produced outlining the financial midpoint of rates in Wales. He suggested that a 30%-40% increase might allow the Authority to reach this midpoint, but that this could be discussed at a future meeting when the information was available. The Chair also suggested that any anomalies around care that Members are aware of should be brought to the Task Group for their consideration at a future date.

In thanking Members, external contributors and Officers for their contributions, the Chair closed the meeting at 6.10 p.m.

Approved as a correct record and subject to any amendments or corrections agreed and recorded in the minutes of the meeting held on 24th May 2021, they were signed by the Chair.

CHAIR